

7TH EDITION

Foundations of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism

Colin Baker and Wayne E. Wright



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Bilingualism and Multilingualism: Definitions and Distinctions

Introduction

Since a bicycle has two wheels and binoculars are for two eyes, it would seem that bilingualism is simply about two languages. Likewise, multilingualism seems simply to be about two or more languages. While bilingualism and multilingualism are different, for the sake of brevity multilingualism will be combined under bilingualism where there is similarity, and distinctions will be made only as necessary.

The aim of this chapter is to show that the ownership of two or more languages is not so simple as having two wheels on a bicycle. Is someone bilingual if they are fluent in one language but less than fluent in their other language? Is someone bilingual if they rarely or never use one of their languages? Is someone multilingual if they have memorized a handful of words and phrases in other languages? Such questions need addressing before other topics in this book can be discussed.

To understand the answers to these questions, it is valuable to make an initial distinction between bilingualism and multilingualism as an individual characteristic, and bilingualism and multilingualism in a social group, community, region or country. Bilingualism and multilingualism can be examined as the possession of the individual. Various themes in this book start with bilingualism as experienced by individual people. For example, a discussion of whether or not bilingualism affects thinking requires research on monolingual, bilingual and multilingual individuals.

From sociology, sociolinguistics, politics, geography, education and social psychology comes a 'group' perspective. Bilinguals and multilinguals are usually found in groups. Thus, linguists study how the vocabulary and language use of multilingual groups change across time. Geographers plot the density of minoritized language speakers in a country. Educationalists examine bilingual and multilingual educational policy and provision for particular language groups. Such groups may be located in a particular region (e.g. Basques in Spain) or may be scattered across communities (e.g. Arabic-, Chinese- and Spanish-speakers in the United States).

The initial distinction is therefore between bilingualism (and multilingualism) as an individual possession and as a group possession. This is usually termed **individual bilingualism** and **societal bilingualism**. Like most distinctions, there are important links between the two parts. For example, the attitudes of individuals towards a particular minority language may affect language maintenance, language restoration and downward language shift or language death in society.

In order to understand the term 'bilingualism', some important distinctions at the individual level are discussed in this chapter. We consider terminology, the ways individuals use two more languages, bilingual and multilingual ability, degrees of

bilingualism, monolingual versus holistic views of bilingualism, and communicative competence as a way of conceptualizing language proficiency. An introduction to bilingualism and multilingualism as a group possession (societal bilingualism or plurilingualism) is provided in Chapters 3 and 4.

Terminology

If a person is asked whether they speak two or more languages, the question is ambiguous. A person may be able to speak two languages but may tend to speak only one language in practice. Alternatively, the individual may regularly speak two languages, but competence in one language may be much stronger. Another person may use one language for conversation and one or two others for writing and reading. Yet another may mix their languages in creative ways when communicating with others. An essential distinction is therefore between language ability and language *use*. This is sometimes referred to as the difference between degree and function.

Before discussing the nature of language use and abilities, an awareness of often-used terms and distinctions is needed. For example, apart from language ability there are language achievement, language competence, language performance, language proficiency and language skills. Do they all refer to the same thing, or are there subtle distinctions between the terms? To add to the problem, different authors and researchers sometimes tend to adopt their own specific meanings and distinctions.

Some Dimensions of Bilingualism and Multilingualism

- (1) **Ability.** Some bilinguals actively speak and write in both languages (productive bilingualism or competence), others are more passive bilinguals and have receptive bilingualism (ability to understand or read). For some, an ability in two or more languages is well developed. Others may be moving through the early stages of acquiring a second language as emergent bilinguals. Ability is thus on a dimension or continuum, with dominance and development varied across speakers.
- (2) **Use.** The domains (contexts) where each language is acquired and used are varied (e.g. home, school, street, phone, online). An individual's different languages may be used for different purposes. For example, one language may be used at home and another in school.
- (3) **Balance.** Rarely are bilinguals and multilinguals equal in their ability or use of their two or more languages. Often one language is dominant, and this can change over time.
- (4) **Age.** When children learn two languages from birth, this is often called simultaneous bilingualism, infant bilingualism or bilingual first language acquisition. If a child learns a second language after about three years of age, the term sequential bilingualism (or consecutive bilingualism) tends to be used. Chapters 5 and 6 consider age issues in detail.
- (5) **Development.** Incipient bilinguals have one well developed language while the other is in the early stages of development. When a second language is developing, this is ascendant bilingualism; in contrast, recessive bilingualism is when one language is decreasing, resulting in temporary or permanent language attrition.
- (6) **Culture.** Individuals with two or more languages typically become more or less bicultural or multicultural. It is possible for someone (e.g. a world language major)

to have high proficiency in two languages but be relatively **monocultural**. A process of acculturation accompanies language learning when immigrants and refugees, for example, learn the majority language of the host country. Bicultural competence tends to relate to knowledge of language cultures; feelings and attitudes towards those two cultures; behaving in culturally appropriate ways; awareness and empathy; and having the confidence to express biculturalism (Grosjean, 2019). Culture, however, is dynamic; a bilingual's biculturalism is likely to be an ever-shifting hybrid mix of their two cultures, into what some scholars refer to as the 'third space' (Bhabha, 2004).

- (7) **Contexts.** Some live in bilingual and multilingual **endogenous communities** that use more than one language on an everyday basis. Others live in more monolingual and monocultural regions and network with other speakers of their languages by phone, email, text messages, video chats, social media or travel for in-person visits. Where there is an absence of a second language community, the context is exogenous (e.g. Russian bilinguals in the United States). Some contexts may be subtractive, where the politics of a country favors the replacement of the home language by the majority language (e.g. Korean being replaced by Japanese in Japan). This particularly occurs among immigrants and refugees in the United States, United Kingdom and elsewhere. Other contexts are additive, such that a person learns a second language at no cost to their first language, as occurs in elite (or prestigious) bilingualism.
- (8) **Choice.** Elective bilingualism is a characteristic of individuals who choose to learn a language, for example in the classroom. Elective bilinguals typically come from majority language groups (e.g. English-speaking North Americans who learn French or Arabic; Chinese-speakers in China who learn English). They add an additional language without losing their first language. **Circumstantial bilinguals** learn another language to function effectively because of their circumstances (e.g. as immigrants or refugees). Their first language is insufficient to meet their educational, political and employment requirements, and the communicative needs of the society in which they reside. Circumstantial bilinguals are groups of individuals who must become bilingual to operate in the majority language society that surrounds them. Consequently, their first language is in danger of being replaced by the second language – a subtractive context. The difference between elective and circumstantial bilingualism is important because it immediately locates differences of prestige and status, politics and power among bilinguals.

An Individual's Use of Two or More Languages

Grosjean (2012: 4) proposes a definition of bilingualism that places emphasis on the **regular use of languages** rather than fluency: 'bilinguals are those who use two or more languages (or dialects) in their everyday lives'. Valdés (2015: 38) offers a similar definition but with a focus on ability to function: 'Bilingual/multilingual individuals ... are able to function (i.e. speak, understand, read, or write) even to a very limited degree in more than one language'. Mohanty (2019: 17) defines multilingualism from a communicative point of view: 'the ability of communities or persons to meet the communicative requirements of themselves and their society in normal daily life in two or more languages in their interactions with the speakers of any of these languages'. Kalaja and Melo-Pfeifer (2019: 1) emphasize that 'multilingualism is lived or subjectively

experienced', and thus is it important 'to figure out how multilinguals themselves feel about becoming or being multilinguals, or what the different languages and their use might mean to them personally' (Kalaja & Melo-Pfeifer, 2019: 3).

Language use cannot be divorced from its context, nor from the effects of the interactions of different combinations of people in a conversation. Language is not produced in a vacuum; it is enacted in changing dramas. As in the theatre props, scenery and stage change, so does our use of two or more languages. Communication includes not only the structure of language (e.g. grammar, vocabulary) but also who is saying what, to whom, in which circumstances. One person may have limited linguistic skills but, in certain situations, be successful in communication. Another person may have relative linguistic mastery but, through undeveloped social skills or being in a strange circumstance, be relatively unsuccessful in communication. The social environment where two or more languages function is crucial to understanding bilingual and multilingual usage. Therefore, this section considers the use and function of an individual's languages.

An individual's use of their bilingual ability (functional bilingualism) moves into language production across a wide range of everyday contexts and events. Functional bilingualism concerns when, where and with whom people use their two languages. Table 1.1 provides examples of the different targets (people) and contexts (often called domains) where functional bilingualism is enacted in different role relationships.

Table 1.1 Examples of language targets and contexts

Examples of language targets	Examples of language contexts (domains)
Nuclear family	Shopping
Extended family	Visual and auditory media (e.g. TV, radio, videos)
Work colleagues	Printed media (e.g. newspapers, magazines, books)
Friends	Cinema, nightclubs, restaurants, cafés, theaters, concerts
Acquaintances	Work
Neighbors	Correspondence, telephone, official communication
Religious leaders	Clubs, society, organizations, sporting activities
Teachers	Leisure and hobbies
Principals, other leaders	Religious meetings
Bureaucrats	Schools, universities, government agencies
Complete strangers	Internet, information and communications technology (e.g. email, texting, video chatting, social media)
Local community	

Language Choice

Not all bilinguals have regular opportunities to use their languages. In a largely monolingual community there may be little choice about language use from day to day. However, in communities where two or more languages are widely spoken, bilinguals may use their languages on a daily or frequent basis. When bilinguals use both their languages, there is often language choice. If the other person is known to the bilingual as a family member, friend or colleague, a relationship has usually been established through one language. If both are bilingual, they have the option of changing to the other language (e.g. to include others in the conversation) or to use a mix of both languages as they communicate.

If the other person is not known, a bilingual may quickly pick up clues as to which language to use. Clues such as dress, appearance, age, accent and command of a language may suggest which language is appropriate. In multilingual areas of Canada

and the United States, for example, employees dealing with the general public may glance at a person's name on their records to help them decide which language to use.

An individual's attitudes and preferences will influence their choice of language. In a minority/majority language situation, older people may prefer to speak the minority language. Teenagers from the 1.5 generation or second generation, for example, may reject the minority language in favor of the majority language because of its higher status and more fashionable image. A comment from a trilingual Chinese-Cambodian refugee high school student who arrived in the United States at a young age illustrates how perceptions about language and identity may affect language choice: in describing her language preference, she said, 'English has all the words to describe how I feel'.

In situations where the native language is perceived to be under threat, some bilinguals may seek to avoid speaking the majority or dominant language to assert and reinforce the status of the other language. For example, French-Canadians in Québec sometimes refuse to speak English in shops and offices to emphasize the status of French.

Mohanty (2019) observes that language choice for multilingual individuals depends on a host of complex sociolinguistic, political and cultural conditions. He gives the example of the Phulbani District in India, where Kui-speaking Kond tribal members make up the majority of speakers in some areas while non-tribal members in the district speak Odia. Kui and Odia are the main languages spoken within their respective language communities. However, both languages are freely used in the weekly markets and other public domains, along with Hindi, Telugu and borrowed English words (e.g. table, car, school, cinema) in codemixed forms of the languages. Mohanty also gives the example of Indian civil servants, who are often required to learn the majority language of the state to which they are assigned. The civil servants choose to learn the language for a specific purpose and benefit (e.g. to do their job and get paid) but may not personally identify with it. Likewise, Mohanty notes that in many non-English-speaking multilingual societies 'there is a growing group of people with formal education and varying degrees of functional competence in English, mostly for professional use; not all of them identify with the language or have a sense of pride in it' (Mohanty, 2019: 17).

Sayer's (2012) ethnographic work in Oaxaca, Mexico, demonstrates the ambiguities and tensions surrounding language choice as experienced by local (Mexican) English teachers. For example, one teacher explained her hesitancy to help translate for a foreigner struggling to communicate with a pharmacist in terms of a fear of being viewed as a 'show-off' by other Mexican customers. Another teacher described a conflict he had with a guy at a football pitch. During the confrontation (in Spanish), one of the guy's friends came over and said in English 'Hey, take it easy! What's the problem?' The teacher viewed the sudden interjection in English as this guy looking down on him, showing off, 'putting on airs' because he had lived in 'el norte' (the north, i.e. the USA), demonstrating what he called a 'pocho attitude'. The teacher, who was well educated and who had also spent time in the United States, refused to respond to 'pocho guy' in English (despite the urging of friends) because he didn't want to 'drop down to his level'.

Some minority languages are mostly confined to a private and domestic role. This happens when a minority language has historically been disparaged and deprived of status. In western Brittany in France, for example, many people use the Breton language only in the family and with close friends. They can be offended if addressed by a stranger in Breton, believing that such a stranger is implying they are uneducated and cannot speak French.

An individual may also switch languages, either deliberately or subconsciously, to accommodate the perceived preference of the other participant in the conversation. A language switch may be made because one language is regarded as the more prestigious or more appropriate for the other person. To gain acceptance or status, a person may deliberately and consciously use the majority language. Alternatively, a person may use a minority language as a form of affiliation or belonging to a group.

Bilingual and Multilingual Ability

The Four Language Skills

Edwards (2013: 14–15) suggests that ‘language repertoire expansion is not a particularly rare feat’ and asserts that ‘all normally intelligent people can at least become functional in another language’. However, if we confine the question ‘Are you bilingual?’ to ability in two languages, the issue becomes ‘What particular language ability?’ There are four basic language domains, abilities or skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. As Table 1.2 illustrates, these four abilities fit into two dimensions: receptive or productive skills, and oracy or literacy.

Table 1.2 The four basic language skills

	Oracy	Literacy
Receptive skills	Listening	Reading
Productive skills	Speaking	Writing

Table 1.2 suggests avoiding a simple classification of who is, or is not, bilingual. Some speak a language but do not read or write it. Some listen and read in a language with understanding (passive bilingualism) but do not speak or write it. Some understand a spoken language but do not themselves speak it (receptive bilinguals). To classify people as either bilinguals or monolinguals is thus too simplistic. Or, to return to the opening analogy, the two wheels of bilingualism exist in different sizes and styles. García (2009a) suggests that a more accurate depiction of the complex and dynamic nature of bilingualism is a moon buggy with an intricate wheel system capable of moving in multiple directions across varied terrains. The four basic language skills do not exist in black and white terms. Between black and white are not only many shades of gray; there also exist a wide variety of colors. Each language skill can be more or less developed. Reading ability can range from simple and basic to fluent and accomplished. Someone may listen with understanding in one context (e.g. shops) but not in another context (e.g. an academic lecture). Many bilingual and multilingual individuals in African and Asian nations speak home languages with no writing systems, but may be literate in a standardized variety of a regional, national or international language. And some of these individuals may use the orthography of a national or international language to approximate the sounds of their unwritten home languages so that they can communicate via text messages.

These examples show that the four skills can be further refined into sub-scales and dimensions. There are skills within skills, such as pronunciation, extent of vocabulary, correctness of grammar, the ability to convey exact meanings in different situations and variations in style. However, these skills tend to be viewed from an academic or

classroom perspective. Using a language on the street or on social media requires a greater focus on social competence with language (e.g. the idioms and 'lingo' of the street or online community).

The range and types of sub-skills that can be measured are large and debated. Language abilities such as speaking or reading can be divided into increasingly microscopic parts. What in practice is tested and measured to portray an individual's bilingual performance is considered later in the book. What has emerged so far is that a person's ability in two or more languages is multidimensional and will tend to evade simple categorization.

Degrees of Bilingualism

So far, it has been suggested that deciding who is or is not bilingual or multilingual is difficult. Simple categorization is arbitrary and requires a value judgment about the minimum competence needed to achieve a label of 'bilingual'. Therefore, a classic definition of bilingualism such as 'the native-like control of two or more languages' (Bloomfield, 1933) appears too extreme ('native-like'). The definition is also ambiguous; what is meant by 'control' and who forms the 'native' reference group?

At the other extreme is incipient bilingualism, which allows people with minimal competence in a second language to squeeze into the bilingual category (Diebold, 1964). Tourists with a few phrases and business people with a few greetings in a second language could be incipient bilinguals. Almost every adult in the world knows a few words in another language. The danger of being too exclusive is not overcome by being too inclusive.

Valdés (2003) suggests one possibility is to view bilinguals as existing on a continuum, as illustrated in Figure 1.1, where A and B are the two languages. The first letter is the stronger language, and font sizes and case suggest different levels of proficiency in each.

Language A	A 'bilingual' individual's proficiency												Language B
Monolingual in A	A _b	A _b	A _b	A _b	A _b	AB	BA	B _a	B _a	B _a	B _a	B _a	Monolingual in B

Figure 1.1 Bilingual language proficiency continuum

Key: The first letter (A or B) is the stronger language, and font sizes and case (upper and lower) suggest an individual's different levels of proficiency.

However, as Grosjean and Li (2013: 12) point out, 'Bilinguals usually acquire and use their languages for different purposes, in different domains of life, with different people. Different aspects of life often require different languages.' They call these different uses of a bilingual's languages for different functions as the complementarity principle. Thus, a bilingual's 'stronger' language may vary depending on the context (e.g. at home, at school, at work, at church, in an online community). Consider, for example, a Latina graduate student in a US university who works as a bilingual teacher and who is active in a Spanish-speaking church. She may feel more competent in English when discussing educational theories, feel competent in both languages when teaching children, and feel more competent in Spanish when discussing and practicing

her religion. Thus, a complex but more accurate view of one person's bilingual's proficiency is shown in Figure 1.2.

Language A	A 'bilingual' individual's proficiency may vary in different contexts												Language B
Context 1 Monolingual	A _b	A _b	A _b	A _b	A _b	AB	BA	B _a	B _a	B _a	B _a	B _a	Monolingual
Context 2 Monolingual	A _b	A _b	A _b	A _b	A _b	AB	BA	B _a	B _a	B _a	B _a	B _a	Monolingual
Context 3 Monolingual	A _b	A _b	A _b	A _b	A _b	AB	BA	B _a	B _a	B _a	B _a	B _a	Monolingual
Context 4 Monolingual	A _b	A _b	A _b	A _b	A _b	AB	BA	B _a	B _a	B _a	B _a	B _a	Monolingual
Etc...													

Figure 1.2 A more complex continuum of an individual's bilingual language proficiency, by context

Key: The first letter (A or B) is the stronger language, and font sizes and case (upper and lower) suggest different levels of proficiency according to changing contexts.

If all of these contexts were broken down by proficiencies across each of the four basic language skills (i.e. listening, speaking, reading and writing), an even more complex, multifaceted representation of bilingualism would emerge. And then consider the additional layers of complexity for multilinguals who use three or more languages across various contexts and domains.

Who is or is not categorized as a bilingual or multilingual will depend on the purpose of the categorization. At different times governments, for example, may wish to include or exclude language minorities. Where an indigenous language exists (e.g. Irish in Ireland), a government may wish to maximize its count of bilinguals. A high count may indicate government success in language planning. In comparison, in a suppressive, assimilationist approach, immigrant minority languages and bilinguals may be minimized (e.g. Asian languages in the United Kingdom in the Census – see Chapter 2).

There is danger in making arbitrary cut-off points about who is bilingual or not along the competence dimensions. Differences in classification will continue to exist among different authors. One alternative is to move away from the multi-colored canvas of proficiency levels to a portrait of the everyday use of the two languages by individuals.

The literature on bilingualism, however, frequently spotlights one particular group of bilinguals whose competences in both languages are well developed (i.e. those at AB or BA on the above continuum). Someone who is approximately equally fluent in two languages across various contexts and domains has been termed an *equilingual* or *ambilingual* or, more commonly, a *balanced bilingual*.

Balanced bilingualism is mostly used as an idealized concept. Rarely is anyone equally competent in two or more languages across all their domains. As the complementarity principle asserts, most bilinguals will use their languages for different purposes and with different people. Balanced bilingualism is also a problematic concept for other reasons. The balance may exist at a low level of competence in the two languages that are nevertheless approximately equal in proficiency. Or, they may have well developed languages but in non-standard varieties that are less valued by the broader society. Or, they may equally draw upon two well developed languages that they frequently mix in creative and effective communicative ways. While these are

within the literal interpretation of 'balanced bilingual', they are not the sense employed by many researchers on bilingualism. The implicit idea of balanced bilingualism has often been of 'appropriate' competence in the standard variety of both languages, typically in academic contexts. Thus, a student who can fully understand the delivery of the curriculum in school in either language and effectively participate in classroom activities in either language would be an example of a balanced bilingual.

Given its rarity, is 'balanced bilingualism' of use as a term? While it has limitations of definition and measurement, it has proved to be of value in research and theory (see Chapter 7). However, categorizing individuals into such groups raises the issue of comparisons. Who is judged 'normal', proficient, skilled, fluent or competent? Who judges? Based on what criteria? The danger is in using monolinguals as the point of reference, as considered in the next section of this chapter.

An argument advanced by several scholars (e.g. Grosjean & Li, 2013) is that there are two contrasting views of individual bilinguals. First, there is a monolingual (or fractional) view of bilinguals, which evaluates the bilingual as 'two monolinguals in one person'. The second, holistic (or multi-competence) view argues that the bilingual is not the sum of two complete or incomplete monolinguals, but that he or she has a unique linguistic profile. We now consider these views in more detail.

The Monolingual View of Bilingualism

Despite the fact that between half and two-thirds of the world's population is bilingual to some degree, a monolingual view (or monoglossic perspective) of bilingualism takes monolingualism as the norm. Thus monolingual English-speakers in countries such as the United States and England may consider bilinguals to be an oddity or inferior. Valdés (2015: 39) explains:

Embedded with the discourse of monolingualism are strong beliefs about (a) the dangers of early bilingualism, (b) the negative effects of 'unbalanced' bilingualism on individuals, and (c) the expectation that the 'true' or 'real' bilingualism will be identical to native speakers in both their languages.

The construct of monolingualism is often taken for granted, unquestioned and assumed to be perfectly normal. Gramling (2016), however, argues that monolingualism itself is a social invention, and traces the history of its development, including its correspondence with the development of nation states. Nevertheless, the ideologies surrounding the invention of monolingualism lead many teachers, administrators and politicians to treat the two languages of a bilingual as separate distinct systems, as if students are two monolinguals in one. Such a view leads to overly simplistic notions of languages simply being added or subtracted from the mind of the bilingual. The monolingual view is closely associated with the language-as-a-problem orientation, leading to education programs that either restrict the use of the home language or use it only temporarily, to transition students as quickly as possible to the dominant school language (Hornberger, 2017; Ruiz, 1984). Even in some stronger forms of bilingual education, a monolingual view leads to an insistence on the strict separation of the students' languages by time, day or subject (see Chapter 10).

One expectation from this fractional viewpoint is for bilinguals to show a proficiency comparable to that of a monolingual in both languages. If that proficiency

does not exist in both languages, especially in the majority language, then bilinguals may be denigrated and classified as inferior. This perceived lack of proficiency is often determined by standardized language proficiency tests in English or other languages spoken by the students, in which their scores are compared with those of monolingual speakers. This results in misleading and deficit-oriented labels to describe students. One enduring label from the 1970s describes such students as *semilinguals* (or *double semilinguals*), suggesting students lack vocabulary, grammar knowledge and ability to express themselves fully in either language. MacSwan *et al.* (2002) documented a common practices in many US schools of labeling Latinx immigrant children as both 'non-English speaking' and 'non-Spanish-speaking', based on the results of language proficiency tests, and of referring to such students as 'non-nons'. More recently, the label 'long-term English language learner' (LTEL) is commonly used across the United States to describe students classified as English language learners for five or more years (Menken & Kleyn, 2010; Olsen, 2010). These labels evoking the construct of 'semilingualism' from a monolingual view of bilingualism are unfair and are more politically and often racially motivated than accurate or commonplace (Flores, 2020b; Flores *et al.*, 2015).

A number of scholars have pointed out the major problems with 'semilingualism' and its associated terms (Edelsky *et al.*, 1983; MacSwan, 2000; MacSwan & Rolstad, 2003; MacSwan *et al.*, 2002; Menken & Kleyn, 2010; Wiley, 2005; Wiley & Rolstad, 2014). First, these terms have disparaging and belittling overtones that invoke expectations of underachievement and failure. Second, if languages are relatively undeveloped, the origins may not be in bilingualism *per se*, but in the economic, political and social conditions that create such under-development. Third, as noted above, most bilinguals use their languages for different purposes in different contexts. Thus, a person may be competent in some domains but not in others. Fourth, the educational tests used to assess language proficiencies measure only standard varieties of languages and typically measure only a small, unrepresentative sample of a person's daily language behavior (see Chapter 2). Finally, these terms often serve to misrepresent and marginalize the language practices of language minoritized communities of color (Flores, 2019). For example, Flores *et al.* (2015: 129) interviewed Latinx New York high school students officially classified as LTELLs who strongly disagree with the school's classification of their language proficiency:

Candido: We already know English and all that stuff.

Claudia: For most of us, it's like our first language, I mean our main language.

Yamile: 'Cuz they think we don't know much English, but we do. Just 'cuz we know another language.

Flores *et al.* (2015: 130) argue these 'are not students lacking language, but (emergent) bilinguals with a repertoire that allows them to maneuver multiple languages and contexts in ways that are complex and dynamic'. Flores and Rosa (2015) argue the use of such terminology marginalizes the language practices of language minoritized students and thus represent raciolinguistic ideologies. Raciolinguistics considers ideologies surrounding language, race and power, and how they are related and intersect (Rosa, 2019). The focus on race is important, given that bilinguals and multilinguals within a given society are often racialized minorities, and language often shapes our ideas about race (Alim *et al.*, 2016). Flores and Rosa (2015: 167) describe

how the language practices of racialized minorities are constantly judged by the 'white gaze and the white listening subject'. As Ortega (2019: 31) explains:

Raciolinguistics offers a lens through which to understand that it is deep social inequities, not language per se, that shape whose multilingualism is accepted and praised and supported, whose multilingualism is feared as a problem to be remedied or even eradicated, and whose multilingualism remains invisible.

These criticisms do not detract from the fact that people do differ in their language abilities. This may not be the result of being bilingual or multilingual. Economic and social factors or educational provision may, for example, be the cause. Rather than highlight an apparent 'deficit' in language development, the more equitable and positive approach is to emphasize that, under the right conditions, students are capable of developing high levels of competence in a standardized language variety. Instead of concentrating negatively on a 'language deficit', a better approach is to locate the causes in, for example, the type of language tests used, material deprivation, or the type and quality of schooling, and not in language itself (see Chapters 9, 15 and 17). Second language users are not deficient communicators. They need to be seen as legitimate speakers of a language in their own right.

Students in the process of developing proficiency in a new language may be more accurately viewed as emergent bilinguals (García, 2009a). 'Emergent bilinguals' is a wide-ranging term accenting future language development towards fuller bilingualism. The term is increasingly preferred by many to labels such as English language learner (ELL) and the deficit-oriented label limited English proficient (LEP) students, because these labels do not acknowledge the students' other language(s). While 'emergent bilinguals' suggests a more holistic view of bilinguals, there is no obvious end-point when 'emergent' finishes. Some use 'advanced bilinguals' to address this limitation (e.g. Smith & de Oliveira, 2019). Multilingual learners is gaining popularity as a more general term which emphasizes that students anywhere in the process of developing one or more new languages are indeed multilingual.

The Holistic View of Bilingualism

Those who take a holistic or heteroglossic perspective of bilingualism view bilingualism as the norm, and treat the languages of a bilingual as interconnected and co-existing, or, as making up a single linguistic system (García & Li Wei, 2014). Hopewell and Escamilla (2015: 39) explain:

Holistic understandings of bilingualism are grounded in the idea that what is known and understood in one language contributes to what is known and understood in the other, and that all languages contribute to a single and universally accessible linguistic and cognitive system.

García (2009a) introduced the term *dynamic bilingualism* to focus on the ways bilinguals draw on the range of features associated with socially constructed named languages within their linguistic repertoire in complex and dynamic ways as they communicate with others and engage in collaborative tasks. As explained by García and Li Wei (2014: 13–14):

Unlike the view of two separate systems that are added (or even interdependent), a dynamic conceptualization of bilingualism goes beyond the notion of two autonomous languages, of a first language (L1) and a second language (L2), and of **additive** or **subtractive bilingualism**. Instead, dynamic bilingualism suggests that the language practices of bilinguals are complex and interrelated; they do not emerge in a linear way or function separately since there is only one linguistic system.

García (2009a) extends Welsh educator Cen Williams's (1994) concept of **translanguaging** to describe the natural ways bilinguals use their languages in their everyday lives as they make sense of their bilingual worlds. In contrast to 'monolingual view' practices that insist on strict separation of languages in the classroom, a holistic dynamic view of bilingualism calls for the use of translanguaging as a pedagogical tool for teaching and learning (see Chapter 13).

The languages of bilinguals may also be viewed positively as multicompetences (Grosjean & Li, 2013). Grosjean (2008) uses an analogy from the world of athletics, and asks whether we can fairly judge a sprinter or a high-jumper against a hurdler. The sprinter and high-jumper concentrate on one event and may excel in it. The hurdler concentrates on two different skills, trying to combine a high standard in both. With only a few exceptions, the hurdler will be unable to sprint as fast as the sprinter, or jump as high as the high-jumper. This is not to say that the hurdler is a worse athlete than the other two. Any judgment of who is the best athlete makes little sense. This analogy suggests that comparing the language proficiency of a monolingual with a multilingual's proficiency is similarly unjust.

There is sometimes a political reality that deters the blossoming of a holistic view of the bilingual. In Australia, much of Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom, the dominant English-speaking monolingual politicians and administrators tend not to accept a different approach or standard of assessment (one for monolinguals, another for bilinguals). There is also the issue of preparation for the employment market. In countries like Wales, where first-language Welsh-speaking children compete in a largely English-language job market against monolingual English-speakers, the dominant view is that they should be given the same English assessments at school.

Yet a bilingual is a complete linguistic entity, an integrated whole. Levels of proficiency in a language may depend on in which contexts (e.g. street and home) and how often that language is used. We turn next to considerations of language proficiency.

Language Proficiency

So far, this chapter has centered on the variety of language abilities and the danger of categorization using a small or biased selection of language sub-skills. One issue has been whether a wide variety of sub-skills can be reduced to a small number of important dimensions. Oller and Perkins (1980) have suggested that there exists a single factor of **global language proficiency**. This view is associated with attempts to quantitatively measure language proficiency through standardized tests. It has led to the view of a singular academic language proficiency essential for success in the classroom.

The idea of a single factor of global language proficiency is contentious, as the evidence indicates that there are both global and specific aspects of language proficiencies. Most (but not all) language tests narrowly focus on language use in academic

contexts (see Chapter 2). Such tests leave qualitative differences between people unexplored. Out-of-school communicative profiles of people are relatively ignored.

This narrow view of a singular form of 'academic language proficiency' led to the proposal that there is a conceptually distinct category of conversational competence (Cummins, 2000b). This includes the ability to hold a simple conversation in the shop, on the street or on the playground. This dichotomy suggests that conversational language competence may be acquired fairly quickly (in two to three years), but it is not enough to cope with classroom instruction. Academically related language competence in a second language may take from five to eight years or longer to acquire. This divide between 'conversational' and 'academic' language proficiency has been called a false dichotomy and a misrepresentation of the complex nature of language acquisition and proficiency (Flores, 2019; Wiley & Rolstad, 2014). This debate is considered in detail in Chapter 8.

Communicative Competence

The language theories of the 1960s tended to center on language skills and components. The skills comprise listening, speaking, reading and writing, and the components of knowledge comprise grammar, vocabulary, **phonology** and **graphology**. These earlier models did not indicate how skills and knowledge were integrated. For example, how does listening differ from speaking? How does reading differ from writing? Earlier models fail to probe the competence of other people in a conversation. In a conversation, there is negotiation of meaning between two or more people. Real communication involves anticipating a listener's response, understandings and misunderstandings, sometimes clarifying one's own language to ensure joint understanding, plus the influence of different degrees of status and power between people.

Earlier models tended to be purely linguistic and to ignore the social contexts where language is used. A more sociolinguistic approach examines actual content and context of communication, called 'speech acts' or the 'ethnography of communication'. This approach includes looking at the rules of dual language use among bilinguals, their shared knowledge in conversation, and the culturally, socially and politically determined language norms and values of bilingual speech events.

Various holistic models of language competence have been developed. One of the most widely accepted is **communicative competence**. This view of language proficiency was first proposed by Hymes (1972) in direct contrast to Chomsky's cognitive theory of language, with its narrow focuses on the ability of native-speakers to produce grammatically correct sentences. Hymes, a leading founder of sociolinguistics, argued that language proficiency considerations must include the types of knowledge speakers need to communicate competently with others in a given speech community (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Canale and Swain (1980) developed Hymes's construct by identifying and describing four dimensions of communicative competence: grammatical, discourse, sociocultural and strategic competence. Richards and Rodgers (2014) note that the many attempts to refine and add dimensions to the notion of communicative competence since it was introduced are evidence of its usefulness. Communicative competence provides the foundation for the communicative language teaching (CLT) approach prevalent today and has been influential on other widely used communicative frameworks, including the standards for foreign language learning of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages and the Council of Europe's

(Duff, 2014). Table 1.3 provides a description of the various dimensions of communicative competence, as drawn from Savignon (2001: 17–18) and the Stanford Center for Assessment, Learning, and Equity (2016: 2).

Table 1.3 Communicative competence

Competences	Description
Grammatical competence	Is concerned with sentence-level grammatical forms, the ability to recognize the lexical, morphological, syntactic and phonological features of a language and to make use of these features to interpret and form words and sentences
Discourse competence	Is concerned with the interconnectedness of a series of utterances, written words and/or phrases to form a text, a meaningful whole. Includes both bottom-up and top-down text processing and concerns with text coherence and cohesion
Sociocultural/pragmatic competence	An understanding of the social context in which language is used: the roles and relationships of the participants, the information they share and the function of the interaction
Strategic competence	The coping strategies used in unfamiliar contexts, with constraints due to imperfect knowledge of rules or limiting factors in their application, such as fatigue or distraction
Metalinguistic competence	Knowledge of linguistic/grammatical concepts and functions, and the ability to use linguistic terminology to describe and discuss them

Note that this model of communicative competence is inclusive of the types of linguistic knowledge reflected in earlier models of language proficiency (i.e. grammatical and discourse competence), but here the emphasis is on the use of these skills for meaningful communication within the social context, hence the integration with sociocultural/pragmatic competence. This competence is sensitive to the context where language is used, ensuring that language is appropriate to the person or the situation. This may entail sensitivity to differences in local dialect, sensitivity to differences in register (e.g. the register of boardroom, baseball, bar and bedroom). Sociocultural competence may also refer to sensitivity to speaking in a native-like or natural way. This will include cultural variations in grammar and vocabulary (e.g. Black English). Another part of sociocultural competence is the ability to interpret cultural references and figures of speech. Sometimes, to understand a particular conversation, one needs cultural understanding of a specific language. A Welsh figure of speech such as ‘to go round the Orme’ (meaning ‘to be long-winded’) is only fully understandable within local northern Welsh cultural idioms. Similarly, students new to English may find western cultural idioms such as ‘piece of cake’ (meaning ‘a simple or easy task to do’) confusing, even when they know the meaning of each word. Sociocultural competence also includes the kind of knowledge needed in greeting people and leave-taking, in expressing feelings and persuading, matters of politeness in a particular context, the style and formality of language, and even body language (e.g. smiles, eye contact) and the use of silence.

Another important issue within the social context is how speakers cope communicatively in less familiar contexts when confronted with unfamiliar vocabulary or expressions or when they need to express an idea for which they lack the precise vocabulary or structures. Strategic competence addresses strategies learners may use to compensate for gaps in their knowledge, such as requesting their interlocutors to repeat or speak more slowly, or asking for clarification. Learners may paraphrase

where unknown words and structures would otherwise be required (e.g. substituting 'long soft chair' for unknown word 'sofa'). **Metalinguistic competence** (or awareness) provides students with the terminology they need to reflect on and talk about their language learning and use.

The holistic view of language proficiency reflected in the construct of communicative competence has led to attempts to create language proficiency assessments that measure communicative ability (Purpura, 2017). The emphasis has therefore moved over time from the linguistic to the communicative, to interactional competence and the adaptivity of a person in using two or more languages. Since competence in a language is viewed as an integral part of language performance and not abstracted from it, measuring language competence cannot just use pencil-and-paper or computer-based tests, but also needs to investigate the language of genuine communication. Instead of tests that are artificial and stilted (e.g. language dictation tests), communicative performance testing involves creative, unpredictable, contextualized conversation. However, predicting 'real world' performance from such tests, and the 'one-sidedness' that ignores the reality that conversations are jointly constructed and negotiated, remains problematic. This suggests that it will be difficult to measure communicative proficiency in an unbiased, comprehensive, valid and reliable way.

Discussions of language competence often move to questions about the extent to which can we measure a bilingual's performance in their two languages. How can we portray when, where and with whom people use their languages? What are the problems and dangers in measuring bilinguals? These questions provide the themes for the next chapter.

Conclusion

Defining exactly who is or is not bilingual or multilingual is essentially elusive and may ultimately be impossible. Some categorization, however, is often necessary and helpful to make sense of the world. Therefore, categorizations and approximations may be required. Simple narrow definitions such as 'native-like control of two languages' (Bloomfield, 1933) offer little help as they are intrinsically arbitrary and ambiguous. Overly broad definitions that include anyone who can utter a few words or phrases in another language are also of little help.

A more helpful approach may be to locate important distinctions and dimensions surrounding the terms 'bilingualism' and 'multilingualism' that help to refine our thinking. The fundamental distinction is between bilingual ability and bilingual usage. Some bilinguals may be fluent in two languages but rarely use both. Others may be much less fluent but use their languages regularly in different contexts. Bilinguals frequently translanguage, drawing from their linguistic repertoire in creative and effective ways to communicate with other bilinguals. Many other patterns are possible. Languages are not static. Bilingualism is dynamic. Students growing up with or learning two or more languages are 'emergent bilinguals' or 'multilingual learners'.

Profiling a person's use of two or more languages raises questions about when, where and with whom. This highlights the importance of considering domain or context. As individuals move from one situation to another, so may the languages being used, in terms of type (e.g. Spanish, English or translanguageing), content (e.g. vocabulary) and style. Over time and place, an individual's languages are never static but ever changing and evolving.

In terms of speaking, reading, writing and thinking domains in language learning, meaning and use.

Creating a language proficiency measure that is both valid and reliable is the paradigmatic challenge in language assessment categories in literature. The research on the structure of linguistic knowledge (Language Theory). It is a communicative ability and

- The or
- Ar or
- Bil pe
- La
- Bal are
- Dy rep
- Th ing
- Tr en
- Tr th
- Ra
- La la w

In terms of ability in two or more languages, the four basic domains are listening, speaking, reading and writing. It is possible to fragment each of these proficiency domains into more detailed dimensions (e.g. pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, meaning and style). These dimensions can themselves be further dissected and divided.

Creating a multidimensional, elaborate structure of bilingual or multilingual proficiency may make for sensitivity and precision. However, ease of conceptualization and brevity require simplicity rather than complexity. Therefore, simple categorization is the paradoxical partner of complex amplification. This chapter has considered problematic categories, such as balanced bilingualism, semilingualism, long-term English language learners and monolingual (one-factor) views of language ability. These categories have received some depth of discussion and critical response in the research literature. As will be revealed in later chapters, these categories also relate to central research on bilingualism and bilingual education. The chapter has considered theories of the structure of language competence. In particular, the focus has been on linking a linguistic view of language competence with a social communicative competence view. Language can be decomposed into its linguistic constituents (e.g. grammar, vocabulary). It is also important to consider language as a means of making relationships and communicating information. This important dualism will follow us through the book: ability and use; the linguistic and the social; competence and communication.

Key Points in This Chapter

- There is a difference between bilingualism as an individual possession and two or more languages operating within a group, community, region or country.
- At an individual level, there is a distinction between a person's ability in two or more languages and their use of those languages.
- Bilinguals and multilinguals typically use their languages with different people, in different contexts and for different purposes.
- Language domains are listening, speaking, reading and writing.
- Balanced bilinguals, with equal and strong competence in their two languages, are rare.
- Dynamic bilingualism focuses on the ways bilinguals draw on their linguistic repertoire in complex and dynamic ways as they communicate with others.
- The monolingual view of bilingualism sees bilinguals as two monolinguals inside one person.
- The holistic view of bilingualism sees bilinguals as a complete linguistic entity, an integrated whole.
- Translanguaging describes the natural ways bilinguals use their languages in their everyday lives as they make sense of their bilingual worlds.
- Raciolinguistics considers the intersections of race, language and power.
- Language competence includes not only linguistic competence (e.g. vocabulary, grammar) but also competence in different social and cultural situations with different people.